

# **MARITIME LIABILITY**

## **CHAPTER 301 \_GENERAL.**

### **46 U.S.C. 30101 (2002). DEFINITIONS.**

In this subtitle\_

- (1) \_documented vessel\_ means a vessel documented under chapter 121 of this title;
- (2) \_foreign vessel\_ means a vessel of foreign registry or operated under the authority of a foreign country;
- (3) \_public vessel\_ means (except in chapter 315 of this title) a vessel that is owned, demise chartered, or operated by the United States Government or a government of a foreign country;
- (4) \_recreational vessel\_ means a vessel\_
  - (A) operated primarily for pleasure; or
  - (B) leased, rented, or demise chartered to another for the latter\_s pleasure;
- (5) \_seaman\_ means a master or a crewmember of a vessel in operation;
- (6) \_State\_ means a State of the United States, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, the District of Columbia, the Northern Mariana Islands, and any other territory or possession of the United States;
- (7) \_State vessel\_ means a vessel owned or demise chartered by the government of a State or an authority or a political subdivision of a State;
- (8) \_United States\_, when used in a geographic sense, means the States of the United States, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, the District of Columbia, the Northern Mariana Islands, and any other territory or possession of the United States; and
- (9) \_vessel of the United States\_ means a vessel documented under chapter 121 of this title, numbered under chapter 123 of this title, or titled under the law of a State.

## **CHAPTER 313 \_COMMERCIAL INSTRUMENTS AND MARITIME LIENS**

### **SUBCHAPTER I \_GENERAL.**

### **46 U.S.C. 31301 (2002). DEFINITIONS.**

In this chapter\_

- (1) \_acknowledge\_ means making\_
  - (A) an acknowledgment or notarization before a notary public or other official authorized by a law of the United States or a State to take acknowledgments of deeds; or

(B) a certificate issued under the Hague Convention Abolishing the Requirement of Legalization for Foreign Public Documents, 1961;

(2) \_district court\_ means\_

(A) a district court of the United States (as defined in section 451 of title 28);

(B) the District Court of Guam;

(C) the District Court of the Virgin Islands;

(D) the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands;

(E) the High Court of American Samoa; and

(F) any other court of original jurisdiction of a territory or possession of the United States;

(3) \_mortgagee\_ means\_

(A) a person to whom property is mortgaged; or

(B) when a mortgage on a vessel involves a trust, the trustee that is designated in the trust agreement;

(4) \_necessaries\_ includes repairs, supplies, towage, and the use of a dry dock or marine railway;

(5) \_preferred maritime lien\_ means a maritime lien on a vessel\_

(A) arising before a preferred mortgage was filed under section 31321 of this title;

(B) for damage arising out of maritime tort;

(C) for wages of a stevedore when employed directly by a person listed in section 31341 of this title;

(D) for wages of the crew of the vessel;

(E) for general average; or

(F) for salvage, including contract salvage; and

(6) \_preferred mortgage\_

(A) means a mortgage that is a preferred mortgage under section 31322 of this title; and

(B) also means in sections 31325 and 31326 of this title, a mortgage, hypothecation, or similar charge that is established as a security on a foreign vessel if the mortgage, hypothecation, or similar charge was executed under the laws of the foreign country under whose laws the ownership of the vessel is documented and has been registered under those laws in a public register at the port of registry of the vessel or at a central office.

**46 U.S.C. 31302 (2002)). AVAILABILITY OF INSTRUMENTS, COPIES, AND INFORMATION.**

The Secretary of Transportation shall\_

- (1) make any instrument filed or recorded with the Secretary under this chapter available for public inspection;
- (2) on request, provide a copy, including a certified copy, of any instrument made available for public inspection under this chapter; and
- (3) on request, provide a certificate containing information included in an instrument filed or recorded under this chapter.

**46 U.S.C. 31303 (2002). CERTAIN CIVIL ACTIONS NOT AUTHORIZED.** If a mortgage covers a vessel and additional property that is not a vessel, this chapter does not authorize a civil action in rem to enforce the rights of the mortgagee under the mortgage against the additional property.

**46 U.S.C. 31304 (2002). LIABILITY FOR NONCOMPLIANCE.**

- (a) If a person makes a contract secured by, or on the credit of, a vessel covered by a mortgage filed or recorded under this chapter and sustains a monetary loss because the mortgagor or the master or other individual in charge of the vessel does not comply with a requirement imposed on the mortgagor, master, or individual under this chapter, the mortgagor is liable for the loss.
- (b) A civil action may be brought to recover for losses referred to in subsection (a) of this section. The district courts have original jurisdiction of the action, regardless of the amount in controversy or the citizenship of the parties. If the plaintiff prevails, the court shall award costs and attorney fees to the plaintiff.

**46 U.S.C. 31305 (2002). WAIVER OF LIEN RIGHTS.** This chapter does not prevent a mortgagee or other lien holder from waiving or subordinating at any time by agreement or otherwise the lien holder's right to a lien, the priority or, if a preferred mortgage lien, the preferred status of the lien.

**46 U.S.C. 31306 (2002). DECLARATION OF CITIZENSHIP.**

- (a) Except as provided by the Secretary of Transportation, when an instrument transferring an interest in a vessel is presented to the Secretary of Transportation for filing or recording, the transferee shall file with the instrument a declaration, in the form the Secretary may prescribe by regulation, stating information about citizenship and other information the Secretary may require to show the transaction involved does not violate section 9 or 37 of the Shipping Act, 1916 (46 App. U.S.C. 808, 835).
- (b) A declaration under this section filed by a corporation must be signed by its president, secretary, treasurer, or other official authorized by the corporation to execute the declaration.
- (c) Except as provided by the Secretary, an instrument transferring an interest in a vessel is not valid against any person until the declaration required by this section has been filed.
- (d) A person knowingly making a false statement of a material fact in a declaration filed under this section shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned for not more than 5 years, or both.

**46 U.S.C. 31307 (2002). STATE STATUTES SUPERSEDED.** This chapter supersedes any State statute conferring a lien on a vessel to the extent the statute establishes a claim to be enforced by a civil action in rem against the vessel for necessities.

**46 U.S.C. 31308 (2002). SECRETARY OF COMMERCE OR TRANSPORTATION AS MORTGAGEE.** When the Secretary of Commerce or Transportation is a mortgagee under this chapter, the Secretary may foreclose on a lien arising from a right established under a mortgage under title XI of the Merchant Marine Act, 1936 (46 App. U.S.C. 1271 *et seq.*), subject to section 362(b) of title 11.

**46 U.S.C. 31309 (2002). GENERAL CIVIL PENALTY.** Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, a person violating this chapter or a regulation prescribed under this chapter is liable to the United States Government for a civil penalty of not more than \$10,000.

**46 U.S.C. 31321 (2002). FILING, RECORDING, AND DISCHARGE.**

(a)(1) A bill of sale, conveyance, mortgage, assignment, or related instrument, whenever made, that includes any part of a documented vessel or a vessel for which an application for documentation is filed, must be filed with the Secretary of Transportation to be valid, to the extent the vessel is involved, against any person except\_

(A) the grantor, mortgagor, or assignor;

(B) the heir or devisee of the grantor, mortgagor, or assignor; and

(C) a person having actual notice of the sale, conveyance, mortgage, assignment, or related instrument.

(2) Each bill of sale, conveyance, mortgage, assignment, or related instrument that is filed in substantial compliance with this section is valid against any person from the time it is filed with the Secretary.

(3) The parties to an instrument or an application for documentation shall use diligence to ensure that the parts of the instrument or application for which they are responsible are in substantial compliance with the filing and documentation requirements.

(4) A bill of sale, conveyance, mortgage, assignment, or related instrument may be filed electronically under regulations prescribed by the Secretary.

(b) To be filed, a bill of sale, conveyance, mortgage, assignment, or related instrument must\_

(1) identify the vessel;

(2) state the name and address of each party to the instrument;

(3) state, if a mortgage, the amount of the direct or contingent obligations (in one or more units of account as agreed to by the parties) that is or may become secured by the mortgage, excluding interest, expenses, and fees;

(4) state the interest of the grantor, mortgagor, or assignor in the vessel;

(5) state the interest sold, conveyed, mortgaged, or assigned; and

(6) be signed and acknowledged.

(c) If a bill of sale, conveyance, mortgage, assignment, or related document is filed that involves a vessel for which an application for documentation is filed, and the Secretary decides that the vessel cannot be documented by an applicant\_

(1) the Secretary shall send notice of the Secretary\_s decision, including reasons for the decision, to each interested party to the instrument filed for recording; and

(2) 90 days after sending the notice as provided under clause (1) of this subsection, the Secretary\_

(A) may terminate the filing; and

(B) may return the instrument filed without recording it under subsection (e) of this section.

(d) A person may withdraw an application for documentation of a vessel for which a mortgage has been filed under this section only if the mortgagee consents.

(e) The Secretary shall\_

(1) record the bills of sale, conveyances, mortgages, assignments, and related instruments of a documented vessel complying with subsection (b) of this section in the order they are filed; and

(2) maintain appropriate indexes, for use by the public, of instruments filed or recorded, or both.

(f) On full and final discharge of the indebtedness under a mortgage recorded under subsection (e)(1) of this section, a mortgagee, on request of the Secretary or mortgagor, shall provide the Secretary with an acknowledged certificate of discharge of the indebtedness in a form prescribed by the Secretary. The Secretary shall record the certificate.

(g) The mortgage or related instrument of a vessel covered by a preferred mortgage under section 31322(d) of this title, that is later filed under this section at the time an application for documentation is filed, is valid under this section from the time the mortgage or instrument representing financing became a preferred mortgage under section 31322(d).

(h) On full and final discharge of the indebtedness under a mortgage deemed to be a preferred mortgage under section 31322(d) of this title, a mortgagee, on request of the Secretary, a State, or mortgagor, shall provide the Secretary or the State, as appropriate, with an acknowledged certificate of discharge of the indebtedness in a form prescribed by the Secretary or the State, as applicable. If filed with the Secretary, the Secretary shall enter that information in the vessel identification system

under chapter 125 of this title.

#### **46 U.S.C. 31322 (2002) PREFERRED MORTGAGES.**

(a) A preferred mortgage is a mortgage, whenever made, that\_

(1) includes the whole of the vessel;

(2) is filed in substantial compliance with section 31321 of this title; and

(3)(A) covers a documented vessel; or

(B) covers a vessel for which an application for documentation is filed that is in substantial compliance with the requirements of chapter 121 of this title and the regulations prescribed under that chapter.

(b) Any indebtedness secured by a preferred mortgage that is filed or recorded under this chapter, or that is subject to a mortgage, security agreement, or instruments granting a security interest that is deemed to be a preferred mortgage under subsection (d) of this section, may have any rate of interest in which the parties agree.1

(c)(1) If a preferred mortgage includes more than one vessel or property that is not a vessel, the mortgage may provide for the separate discharge of each vessel and all property not a vessel by the payment of a part of the mortgage indebtedness.

(2) If a vessel covered by a preferred mortgage that includes more than one vessel or property that is not a vessel is to be sold on the order of a district court in a civil action in rem, and the mortgage does not provide for separate discharge as provided under paragraph (1) of this subsection\_

(A) the mortgage constitutes a lien on that vessel in the full amount of the outstanding mortgage indebtedness; and

(B) an allocation of mortgage indebtedness for purposes of separate discharge may not be made among the vessel and other property covered by the mortgage.

(d)(1) A mortgage, security agreement, or instrument granting a security interest perfected under State law covering the whole of a vessel titled in a State is deemed to be a preferred mortgage if\_

(A) the Secretary certifies that the State titling system complies with the Secretary\_s guidelines for a titling system under section 13106(b)(8) of this title; and

(B) information on the vessel covered by the mortgage, security agreement, or instrument is made available to the Secretary under chapter 125 of this title.

(2) This subsection applies to mortgages, security agreements, or instruments covering vessels titled in a State after\_

(A) the Secretary\_s certification under paragraph (1)(A) of this subsection; and

(B) the State begins making information available to the Secretary under chapter 125 of this title.

(3) A preferred mortgage under this subsection continues to be a preferred mortgage even if the vessel is no longer titled in the State where the mortgage, security agreement, or instrument granting a security interest became a preferred mortgage unde

r this subsection.

(e) If a vessel is already covered by a preferred mortgage when an application for titling or documentation is filed\_

(1) the status of the preferred mortgage covering the vessel to be titled in the State is determined by the law of the jurisdiction where the vessel is currently titled or documented; and

(2) the status of the preferred mortgage covering the vessel to be documented under chapter 121 is determined by subsection (a) of this section.

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**Effective April 1, 2003, 46 U.S.C. 31322 has been amended to read as follows:2**

**46 U.S.C. 31322. Preferred mortgages**

(a) A preferred mortgage is a mortgage, whenever made, that--

(1) includes the whole of the vessel;

(2) is filed in substantial compliance with section 31321 of this title; and

(3) (A) covers a documented vessel; or

(B) covers a vessel for which an application for documentation is filed that is in substantial compliance with the requirements of chapter 121 of this title and the regulations prescribed under that chapter and

(4) with respect to a vessel with a fishery endorsement that is 100 feet or greater in registered length, has as the mortgagee-

(A) a person eligible to own a vessel with a fishery endorsement under section 12102(c) of this title;

(B) a state or federally chartered financial institution that is insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation;

(C) a farm credit lender established under title 12, chapter 23 of the United States Code;

(D) a commercial fishing and agriculture bank established pursuant to State law;

(E) a commercial lender organized under the laws of the United States or of a State and eligible to own a vessel under section 12102(a) of this title; or

(F) a mortgage trustee under subsection (f) of this section.

(b) Any indebtedness secured by a preferred mortgage that is filed or recorded under this chapter, or that is subject to a mortgage, security agreement, or instruments granting a security interest that is deemed to be a preferred mortgage under subsection (d) of this section, may have any rate of interest to which the parties agree.

(c) (1) If a preferred mortgage includes more than one vessel or property that is not a vessel, the mortgage may provide for the separate discharge of each vessel and all property not a vessel by

the payment of a part of the mortgage indebtedness.

(2) If a vessel covered by a preferred mortgage that includes more than one vessel or property that is not a vessel is to be sold on the order of a district court in a civil action in rem, and the mortgage does not provide for separate discharge as provided under paragraph (1) of this subsection--

(A) the mortgage constitutes a lien on that vessel in the full amount of the outstanding mortgage indebtedness; and

(B) an allocation of mortgage indebtedness for purposes of separate discharge may not be made among the vessel and other property covered by the mortgage.

(d) (1) A mortgage, security agreement, or instrument granting a security interest perfected under State law covering the whole of a vessel titled in a State is deemed to be a preferred mortgage if-

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(A) the Secretary certifies that the State titling system complies with the Secretary's guidelines for a titling system under section 13106(b)(8) of this title; and

(B) information on the vessel covered by the mortgage, security agreement, or instrument made available to the Secretary under chapter 125 of this title.

(2) This subsection applies to mortgages, security agreements, or instruments covering vessels titled in a State after--

(A) the Secretary's certification under paragraph (1)(A) of this subsection; and

(B) the State begins making information available to the Secretary under chapter 125 of this title.

(3) A preferred mortgage under this subsection continues to be a preferred mortgage even if the vessel is no longer titled in the State where the mortgage, security agreement, or instrument granting a security interest became a preferred mortgage under this subsection.

(e) If a vessel is already covered by a preferred mortgage when an application for titling or documentation is filed--

(1) the status of the preferred mortgage covering the vessel to be titled in the State is determined by the law of the jurisdiction where the vessel is currently titled or documented; and

(2) the status of the preferred mortgage covering the vessel to be documented under chapter 121 is determined by subsection (a) of this section.

(f)(1) A mortgage trustee may hold in trust, for an individual or entity, an instrument or evidence of indebtedness, secured by a mortgage of the vessel to the mortgage trustee, provided that the mortgage trustee\_

(A) is eligible to be a preferred mortgagee under subsection (a)(4), subparagraphs (A)\_(E) of this section;

(B) is organized as a corporation, and is doing business, under the laws of the United States or of



a State;

(C) is authorized under those laws to exercise corporate trust powers;

(D) is subject to supervision or examination by an official of the United States Government or a State;

(E) has a combined capital and surplus (as stated in its most recent published report of condition) of at least \$3,000,000; and

(F) meets any other requirements prescribed by the Secretary.

(2) If the beneficiary under the trust arrangement is not a commercial lender, a lender syndicate or eligible to be a preferred mortgagee under subsection (a)(4), subparagraphs (A)-(E) of this section, the Secretary must determine that the issuance, assignment, transfer, or trust arrangement does not result in an impermissible transfer of control of the vessel to a person not eligible to own a vessel with a fishery endorsement under section 12102(c) of this title.

(3) A vessel with a fishery endorsement may be operated by a mortgage trustee only with the approval of the Secretary.

(4) A right under a mortgage of a vessel with a fishery endorsement may be issued, assigned, or transferred to a person not eligible to be a mortgagee of that vessel under this section only with the approval of the Secretary.

(5) The issuance, assignment, or transfer of an instrument or evidence of indebtedness contrary to this subsection is voidable by the Secretary.

(g) For purposes of this section a "commercial lender" means an entity primarily engaged in the business of lending and other financing transactions with a loan portfolio in excess of \$100,000,000, of which not more than 50 per centum in dollar amount consists of loans to borrowers in the commercial fishing industry, as certified to the Secretary by such lender.

(h) For purposes of this section a "lender syndicate" means an arrangement established for the combined extension of credit of not less than \$20,000,000 made up of four or more entities that each have a beneficial interest, held through an agent, under a trust arrangement established pursuant to subsection (f), no one of which may exercise powers thereunder without the concurrence of at least one other unaffiliated beneficiary.

## **SUBCHAPTER II. COMMERCIAL INSTRUMENTS.**

### **46 U.S.C. 31323 (2002). DISCLOSING AND INCURRING OBLIGATIONS BEFORE EXECUTING PREFERRED MORTGAGES.**

(a) On request of the mortgagee and before executing a preferred mortgage, the mortgagor shall disclose in writing to the mortgagee the existence of any obligation known to the mortgagor on the vessel to be mortgaged.

(b) After executing a preferred mortgage and before the mortgagee has had a reasonable time to file the mortgage, the mortgagor may not incur, without the consent of the mortgagee, any

contractual obligation establishing a lien on the vessel except a lien for\_

- (1) wages of a stevedore when employed directly by a person listed in section 31341 of this title;
  - (2) wages for the crew of the vessel;
  - (3) general average; or
  - (4) salvage, including contract salvage.
- (c) On conviction of a mortgagor under section 31330(a)(1)(A) or (B) of this title for violating this section, the mortgage indebtedness, at the option of the mortgagee, is payable immediately.

**46 U.S.C. 31324 (2002). RETENTION AND EXAMINATION OF MORTGAGES OF VESSELS COVERED BY PREFERRED MORTGAGES.**

- (a) On request, the owner, master, or individual in charge of a vessel covered by a preferred mortgage shall permit a person to examine the mortgage if the person has business with the vessel that may give rise to a maritime lien or the sale, conveyance, mortgage, or assignment of a mortgage of the vessel.
- (b) A mortgagor of a preferred mortgage covering a self-propelled vessel shall use diligence in keeping a certified copy of the mortgage on the vessel.

**46 U.S.C. 31325 (2002). PREFERRED MORTGAGE LIENS AND ENFORCEMENT.**

- (a) A preferred mortgage is a lien on the mortgaged vessel in the amount of the outstanding mortgage indebtedness secured by the vessel.
- (b) On default of any term of the preferred mortgage, the mortgagee may\_
- (1) enforce the preferred mortgage lien in a civil action in rem for a documented vessel, a vessel to be documented under chapter 121 of this title, a vessel titled in a State, or a foreign vessel;
  - (2) enforce a claim for the outstanding indebtedness secured by the mortgaged vessel in\_
- (A) a civil action in personam in admiralty against the mortgagor, maker, comaker, or guarantor for the amount of the outstanding indebtedness or any deficiency in full payment of that indebtedness; and
- (B) a civil action against the mortgagor, maker, comaker, or guarantor for the amount of the outstanding indebtedness or any deficiency in full payment of that indebtedness; and
- (3) enforce the preferred mortgage lien or a claim for the outstanding indebtedness secured by the mortgaged vessel, or both, by exercising any other remedy (including an extrajudicial remedy) against a documented vessel, a vessel for which an application for documentation is filed under chapter 121 of this title, a vessel titled in a State, a foreign vessel, or a mortgagor, maker, comaker, or guarantor for the amount of the outstanding indebtedness or any deficiency in full payment of that indebtedness if\_
- (A) the remedy is allowed under applicable law; and

(B) the exercise of the remedy will not result in a violation of section 9 or 37 of the Shipping Act, 1916 (46 App. U.S.C. 808, 835).

(c) The district courts have original jurisdiction of a civil action brought under subsection (b)(1) or (2) of this section. However, for a documented vessel, a vessel to be documented under chapter 121 of this title, a vessel titled in a State, or a foreign vessel, this jurisdiction is exclusive of the courts of the States for a civil action brought under subsection (b)(1) of this section.

(d)(1) Actual notice of a civil action brought under subsection (b)(1) of this section, or to enforce a maritime lien, must be given in the manner directed by the court to\_\_

(A) the master or individual in charge of the vessel;

(B) any person that recorded under section 31343(a) or (d) of this title an unexpired notice of claim of an undischarged lien on the vessel; and

(C) a mortgagee of a mortgage filed or recorded under section 31321 of this title that is an undischarged mortgage on the vessel.

(2) Notice under paragraph (1) of this subsection is not required if, after search satisfactory to the court, the person entitled to the notice has not been found in the United States.

(3) Failure to give notice required by this subsection does not affect the jurisdiction of the court in which the civil action is brought. However, unless notice is not required under paragraph (2) of this subsection, the party required to give notice is liable to the person not notified for damages in the amount of that person's interest in the vessel terminated by the action brought under subsection (b)(1) of this section. A civil action may be brought to recover the amount of the terminated interest. The district courts have original jurisdiction of the action, regardless of the amount in controversy or the citizenship of the parties. If the plaintiff prevails, the court may award costs and attorney fees to the plaintiff.

(e) In a civil action brought under subsection (b)(1) of this section\_\_

(1) the court may appoint a receiver and authorize the receiver to operate the mortgaged vessel and shall retain in rem jurisdiction over the vessel even if the receiver operates the vessel outside the district in which the court is located; and

(2) when directed by the court, a United States marshal may take possession of a mortgaged vessel even if the vessel is in the possession or under the control of a person claiming a possessory common law lien.

(f)(1) Before title to the documented vessel or vessel for which an application for documentation is filed under chapter 121 is transferred by an extrajudicial remedy, the person exercising the remedy shall give notice of the proposed transfer to the Secretary, to the mortgagee of any mortgage on the vessel filed in substantial compliance with section 31321 of this title before notice of the proposed transfer is given to the Secretary, and to any person that recorded an unexpired notice of claim of an undischarged lien on the vessel under section 31343(a) or (d) of this title before notice of the proposed transfer is given to the Secretary.

(2) Failure to give notice as required by this subsection shall not affect the transfer of title to a

vessel. However, the rights of any holder of a maritime lien or a preferred mortgage on the vessel shall not be affected by a transfer of title by an extrajudicial remedy exercised under this section, regardless of whether notice is required by this subsection or given.

(3) The Secretary shall prescribe regulations establishing the time and manner for providing notice under this subsection.

**46 U.S.C. 31326 (2002). COURT SALES TO ENFORCE PREFERRED MORTGAGE LIENS AND MARITIME LIENS AND PRIORITY OF CLAIMS.**

(a) When a vessel is sold by order of a district court in a civil action in rem brought to enforce a preferred mortgage lien or a maritime lien, any claim in the vessel existing on the date of sale is terminated, including a possessory common law lien of which a person is deprived under section 31325(e)(2) of this title, and the vessel is sold free of all those claims.

(b) Each of the claims terminated under subsection (a) of this section attaches, in the same amount and in accordance with their priorities to the proceeds of the sale, except that\_

(1) the preferred mortgage lien, including a preferred mortgage lien on a foreign vessel whose mortgage has been guaranteed under title XI of the Merchant Marine Act, 1936 (46 App. U.S.C. 1101 et seq.), has priority over all claims against the vessel (except for expenses and fees allowed by the court, costs imposed by the court, and preferred maritime liens); and

(2) for a foreign vessel whose mortgage has not been guaranteed under title XI of that Act, the preferred mortgage lien is subordinate to a maritime lien for necessities provided in the United States.

**46 U.S.C. 31327 (2002). FORFEITURE OF MORTGAGEE INTEREST.** The interest of a mortgagee in a documented vessel or a vessel covered by a preferred mortgage under section 31322(d) of this title may be terminated by a forfeiture of the vessel for a violation of a law of the United States only if the mortgagee authorized, consented, or conspired to do the act, failure, or omission that is the basis of the violation.

**46 U.S.C. 31329 (2002). COURT SALES OF DOCUMENTED VESSELS.**

(a) A documented vessel may be sold by order of a district court only to\_

(1) a person eligible to own a documented vessel under section 12102 of this title; or

(2) a mortgagee of that vessel.

(b) When a vessel is sold to a mortgagee not eligible to own a documented vessel\_

(1) the vessel must be held by the mortgagee for resale;

(2) the vessel held by the mortgagee is subject to section 902 of the Merchant Marine Act, 1936 (46 App. U.S.C. 1242); and

(3) the sale of the vessel to the mortgagee is not a sale foreign within the terms of the first

proviso of section 27 of the Merchant Marine Act, 1920 (46 App. U.S.C. 883).

(c) Unless waived by the Secretary of Transportation, a person purchasing a vessel by court order under subsection (a)(1) of this section or from a mortgagee under subsection (a)(2) of this section must document the vessel under chapter 121 of this title.

(d) The vessel may be operated by the mortgagee not eligible to own a documented vessel only with the approval of the Secretary.

(e) A sale of a vessel contrary to this section is void.

(f) This section does not apply to a documented vessel that has been operated only for pleasure.

#### **46 U.S.C. 31330 (2002). PENALTIES.**

(a)(1) A mortgagor shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned for not more than 2 years, or both, if the mortgagor\_

(A) with intent to defraud, does not disclose an obligation on a vessel as required by section 31323(a) of this title;

(B) with intent to defraud, incurs a contractual obligation in violation of section 31323(b) of this title;

(C) with intent to hinder or defraud an existing or future creditor of the mortgagor or a lienor of the vessel, files a mortgage with the Secretary of Transportation; or

(D) with intent to defraud, does not comply with section 31321(h) of this title.

(2) A mortgagor is liable to the United States Government for a civil penalty of not more than \$10,000 if the mortgagor\_

(A) does not disclose an obligation on a vessel as required by section 31323(a) of this title;

(B) incurs a contractual obligation in violation of section 31323(b) of this title;

(C) files with the Secretary a mortgage made not in good faith; or

(D) does not comply with section 31321(h) of this title.

(b)(1) A person that knowingly violates section 31329 of this title shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned for not more than 3 years, or both.

(2) A person violating section 31329 of this title is liable to the Government for a civil penalty of not more than \$25,000.

(3) A vessel involved in a violation under section 31329 of this title and its equipment may be seized by, and forfeited to, the Government.

(c) If a person not an individual violates this section, the president or chief executive of the person also is subject to any penalty provided under this section.

## **SUBCHAPTER**

### **III. MARITIME LIENS**

#### **46 U.S.C. 31341 (2002). PERSONS PRESUMED TO HAVE AUTHORITY TO PROCURE NECESSARIES.**

(a) The following persons are presumed to have authority to procure necessities for a vessel:

(1) the owner;

(2) the master;

(3) a person entrusted with the management of the vessel at the port of supply; or

(4) an officer or agent appointed by\_

(A) the owner;

(B) a charterer;

(C) an owner pro hac vice; or

(D) an agreed buyer in possession of the vessel.

(b) A person tortiously or unlawfully in possession or charge of a vessel has no authority to procure necessities for the vessel.

#### **46 U.S.C. 31342 (2002). ESTABLISHING MARITIME LIENS.**

(a) Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, a person providing necessities to a vessel on the order of the owner or a person authorized by the owner\_

(1) has a maritime lien on the vessel;

(2) may bring a civil action in rem to enforce the lien; and

(3) is not required to allege or prove in the action that credit was given to the vessel.

(b) This section does not apply to a public vessel.

#### **46 U.S.C. 31343 (2002). RECORDING AND DISCHARGING LIENS ON PREFERRED MORTGAGE VESSELS.**

(a) Except as provided under subsection (d) of this section, a person claiming a lien on a vessel documented, or for which an application for documentation has been filed, under chapter 121 may record with the Secretary of Transportation a notice of that person's lien claim on the vessel. To be recordable, the notice must\_

(1) state the nature of the lien;

(2) state the date the lien was established;

- (3) state the amount of the lien;
- (4) state the name and address of the person; and
- (5) be signed and acknowledged.

(b)(1) The Secretary shall record a notice complying with subsection (a) of this section if, when the notice is presented to the Secretary for recording, the person having the claim files with the notice a declaration stating the following:

(A) The information in the notice is true and correct to the best of the knowledge, information, and belief of the individual who signed it.

(B) A copy of the notice, as presented for recordation, has been sent to each of the following:

- (i) The owner of the vessel.
- (ii) Each person that recorded under subsection (a) of this section an unexpired notice of a claim of an undischarged lien on the vessel.
- (iii) The mortgagee of each mortgage filed or recorded under section 31321 of this title that is an undischarged mortgage on the vessel.

(2) A declaration under this subsection filed by a person that is not an individual must be signed by the president, member, partner, trustee, or other individual authorized to execute the declaration on behalf of the person.

(c)(1) On full and final discharge of the indebtedness that is the basis for a notice of claim of lien recorded under subsection (b) of this section, the person having the claim shall provide the Secretary with an acknowledged certificate of discharge of the indebtedness. The Secretary shall record the certificate.

(2) The district courts of the United States shall have jurisdiction over a civil action in Admiralty to declare that a vessel is not subject to a lien claimed under subsection (b) of this section, or that the vessel is not subject to the notice of claim of lien, or both, regardless of the amount in controversy or the citizenship of the parties. Venue in such an action shall be in the district where the vessel is found or where the claimant resides or where the notice of claim of lien is recorded. The court may award costs and attorneys fees to the prevailing party, unless the court finds that the position of the other party was substantially justified or other circumstances make an award of costs and attorneys fees unjust. The Secretary shall record any such declaratory order.

(d) A person claiming a lien on a vessel covered by a preferred mortgage under section 31322(d) of this title must record and discharge the lien as provided by the law of the State in which the vessel is titled.

(e) A notice of claim of lien recorded under subsection (b) of this section shall expire 3 years after the date the lien was established, as such date is stated in the notice under subsection (a) of this section.

(f) This section does not alter in any respect the law pertaining to the establishment of a maritime

lien, the remedy provided by such a lien, or the defenses thereto, including any defense under the doctrine of laches.